All praise is due to Allah who sent His messenger with guidance and the true religion in order to supersede and overcome every other way of life. Even though the disbelievers hate it. And may peace and salutations be upon the noblest of prophets and messengers, our prophet, our beloved, and the coolness of our eyes, Muhammad ibn Abdullah. And may this peace and salutations be upon him, his companions, his family, and all those who tread his path until the Day of Judgment.

A few weeks ago we spoke on a few different opinions on the issue of voting in a democracy, and the reasons why there are differences of opinion on it. In shaa Allah, this week I want to talk about – according to my studies – what the strongest opinion is. I will also respond to the other opinions that are there and mention in which context those other opinions would be correct.

The position that I believe to be the strongest is that democracy as a system is a system of Shirk. Anyone who is a part of that system, whether they are running for office or voting for an office, or they are calling for that office, is committing Shirk. We'll be talking about a few other subsidiary topics, such as defining Tāghūt, a quick explanation on Tawhīd, what are the excuses for committing Shirk, and what is the role of a Fatwa.

So to begin, I'm going to recite a few verses from the Qur'ān talking about this issue.

وَمَا ٱخۡتَلَفۡتُمۡ فِيهِ مِن شَيۡءٖ فَحُكۡمُهُۥٓ إِلَى ٱللَّهِۚ

"And in anything over which you disagree - its ruling is [to be referred] to Allāh."

[42:10]

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤۡمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُواْ فِيٓ أَنفُسِهِمۡ حَرَجٗا مِّمَّا قَضَيۡتَ وَيُسَلِّمُواْ تَسۡلِيمٗا

"But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission."

[4:65]

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤۡمِنٖ وَلَا مُؤۡمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى ٱللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُۥٓ أَمۡرًا أَن يَكُونَ لَهُمُ ٱلۡخِيَرَةُ مِنۡ أَمۡرِهِمۡۗ وَمَن يَعۡصِ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ ضَلَٰلٗا مُّبِينٗا

"It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allāh and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allāh and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error."

[33:36]

إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوٓاْ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَن يَقُولُواْ سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَاۚ وَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ

"The only statement of the [true] believers when they are called to Allāh and His Messenger to judge between them is that they say, 'We hear and we obey.' And those are the successful."

[24:51]

أَفَغَيْرَ ٱللَّهِ أَبْتَغِي حَكَمًا وَهُوَ ٱلَّذِيٓ أَنزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ مُفَصَّلًاۚ

"[Say], 'Then is it other than Allāh I should seek as judge while it is He who has revealed to you the Book [i.e., the Qur'ān] explained in detail?'"

[6:114]

قُلْ أَرَءَيْتُم مَّآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ لَكُم مِّن رِّزْقٍ فَجَعَلْتُم مِّنْهُ حَرَامًا وَحَلَٰلًا قُلْ ءَآللَّهُ أَذِنَ لَكُمْۖ أَمْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ تَفْتَرُونَ

"Say, 'Have you seen what Allāh has sent down to you of provision of which you have made [some] lawful and [some] unlawful?' Say, 'Has Allāh permitted you [to do so], or do you invent [something] about Allāh?'"

[10:59]

وَلَا تَقُولُواْ لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ ٱلْكَذِبَ هَٰذَا حَلَٰلٌ وَهَٰذَا حَرَامٌ لِّتَفْتَرُواْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْكَذِبَۚ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ

"And do not say about what your tongues assert of untruth, 'This is lawful and this is unlawful,' to invent falsehood about Allāh. Indeed, those who invent falsehood about Allāh will not succeed."

[16:116]

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَٰٓؤُاْ شَرَعُواْ لَهُم مِّنَ ٱلدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنۢ بِهِ ٱللَّهُۚ

"Or have they partners [i.e., other deities] who have ordained for them a religion to which Allāh has not consented?"

[42:21]

قُلْ يَٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ تَعَالَوْاْ إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۭ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِۦ شَيْـًٔا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَقُولُواْ ٱشْهَدُواْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

"Say, 'O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allāh and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allāh.' But if they turn away, then say, 'Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him].'"

[3:64]

ٱتَّخَذُوٓاْ أَحۡبَارَهُمۡ وَرُهۡبَٰنَهُمۡ أَرۡبَابٗا مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلۡمَسِيحَ ٱبۡنَ مَرۡيَمَ وَمَآ أُمِرُوٓاْ إِلَّا لِيَعۡبُدُوٓاْ إِلَٰهٗا وَٰحِدٗاۖ لَّآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَۚ سُبۡحَٰنَهُۥ عَمَّا يُشۡرِكُونَ

"They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allāh, and [also] the Messiah, the son of Mary. And they were not commanded except to worship one God; there is no deity except Him. Exalted is He above whatever they associate with Him."

[9:31]

وَإِنَّ ٱلشَّيَٰطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَىٰٓ أَوۡلِيَآئِهِمۡ لِيُجَٰدِلُوكُمۡۖ وَإِنۡ أَطَعۡتُمُوهُمۡ إِنَّكُمۡ لَمُشۡرِكُونَ

"And indeed do the devils inspire their allies [among men] to dispute with you. And if you were to obey them, indeed, you would be associators [of others with Him]."

[6:121]

أَلَمۡ تَرَ إِلَى ٱلَّذِينَ يَزۡعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمۡ ءَامَنُواْ بِمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيۡكَ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ مِن قَبۡلِكَ يُرِيدُونَ أَن يَتَحَاكَمُوٓاْ إِلَى ٱلطَّٰغُوتِ وَقَدۡ أُمِرُوٓاْ أَن يَكۡفُرُواْ بِهِۦ وَيُرِيدُ ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ أَن يُضِلَّهُمۡ ضَلَٰلَۢا بَعِيدٗا

"Have you not seen those who claim to have believed in what was revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what was revealed before you? They wish to refer legislation to Tāghūt, while they were commanded to reject it; and Satan wishes to lead them far astray."

[4:60]

فِيهَا حُكۡمُ ٱللَّهِ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّوۡنَ مِنۢ بَعۡدِ ذَٰلِكَۚ وَمَآ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ بِٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ

"In which is the judgement of Allāh? Then they turn away, [even] after that; but those are not [in fact] believers."

[5:43]

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمۡ تَعَالَوۡاْ إِلَىٰ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ وَإِلَى ٱلرَّسُولِ رَأَيۡتَ ٱلۡمُنَٰفِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنكَ صُدُودٗا

"And when it is said to them, 'Come to what Allāh has revealed and to the Messenger,' you see the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion."

[4:61]

وَمَنۡ أَحۡسَنُ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ حُكۡمٗا لِّقَوۡمٖ يُوقِنُونَ

"But who is better than Allāh in judgement for a people who are certain [in faith]."

[5:50]

وَمَن لَّمۡ يَحۡكُم بِمَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡكَٰفِرُونَ

"And whoever does not judge by what Allāh has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers."

[5:44]

The word Tāghūt needs more elaboration. Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim rahimahullah explains that this is a creation of Allah that steps beyond its bounds. It takes away some of the rights from Allah, whether it's in being worshipped, obeyed, or followed. He says that in our time, if you look at a lot of people, they worship the Tāghūt instead of worshipping Allah. They obey the Tāghūt instead of obeying the Messenger. And they follow the Shari'ah of the Tāghūt instead of following the Shari'ah of Muhammad ﷺ.

And in order to give you more context as to the word Tāghūt, Allah says,

يَكْفُرْ بِٱلطَّٰغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنۢ بِٱللَّهِ فَقَدِ ٱسْتَمْسَكَ بِٱلْعُرْوَةِ ٱلْوُثْقَىٰ

"So whoever disbelieves in Tāghūt and believes in Allāh has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it."
[2:256]

Allah also says,

بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَٱجْتَنِبُوا۟ ٱلطَّٰغُوتَ

"And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], 'Worship Allāh and avoid Tāghūt.'"
[16:36]

The next point is a quick summary on the types of Tawhīd. There's Tawhīd ar-Rubūbiyyah, Tawhīd al-Ulūhiyyah, and Tawhīd Asmā' was-Sifāt. In English, these are to single Allah out in His actions, to single Allah out in our actions, and to single Allah out in His names and attributes. Quick examples of these are: Allah is the creator of everything. Allah is the sustainer of everything. Allah is the only one who can give life and death. Allah is the only one who can put you into Jannah or Jahannam. Allah is the master of the Day of Judgment. All these things are things that Allah has control over and nobody else does.

The second type is al-Ulūhiyyah, which is us worshipping Allah, and we dedicate our acts of worship for Him alone. We pray to Him alone. We make Du'ā to Him alone. We do tawaf for Him alone. We shave our head for Him alone. We fast, do Zakah, Hajj - all this for Allah alone.

And lastly is His names and attributes. Ar-Rahman, Ar-Rahim, Al-Malik - all these belong only to Him. There are certain attributes which belong only to Him, like Him being on the throne and Him descending to the lowest heaven in the last third of the night. This categorization of Tawhīd is not something that's explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, but over 20 scholars from the first three generations looked at the Qur'ān and Sunnah and used this categorization as a tool to help understand what Tawhīd is. Two examples of verses that they used are in Surah Maryam, where Allah says:

رَّبُّ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَمَا بَيۡنَهُمَا فَٱعۡبُدۡهُ وَٱصۡطَبِرۡ لِعِبَٰدَتِهِۦۚ هَلۡ تَعۡلَمُ لَهُۥ سَمِيّٗا

"Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them - so worship Him and have patience for His worship. Do you know of any similarity to Him?" [19:65]

"Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them." This is singling Allah out in His Lordship. Only He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is in between them. Then Allah says, "***So worship Him and have patience for His worship."*** This is us singling Him out in our acts of worship. Again, we're only worshipping Him, and we're only being steadfast in worshipping Him. Lastly, Allah says, ***"Do you know of any similarity to Him?"*** This is singling Allah out in His names and attributes. There is none equal to Him. Allah also says,

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ
ٱلۡحَمۡدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلۡعَٰلَمِينَ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ مَٰلِكِ يَوۡمِ ٱلدِّينِ إِيَّاكَ نَعۡبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسۡتَعِينُ ٱهۡدِنَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلۡمُسۡتَقِيمَ

"In the name of Allāh, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. [All] praise is [due] to Allāh, Lord of the worlds, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, sovereign of the Day of Recompense. It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path." [1:1-6]

"Alhamdulillāhi Rabbil-'Ālamīn"; is singling Allah out as the Lord of the worlds. *"Ar-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm Māliki Yawmid-Dīn";* is singling Allah out in His names and attributes. He's the most merciful, most compassionate, master of the Day of Judgment. *"Iyyāka na'budu wa iyyāka nasta'īn Ihdinaṣ-ṣirāṭal-mustaqīm";* And You alone do we seek help, and You alone do we worship. Guide us to the straight path. That's us singling Him out in our acts of worship.

There is something called Tawhīd al-Ḥākimiyyah, which is a subcategory that falls into these things. And the evidences for these are the verses that I quoted in the beginning. And Tawhīd al-Ḥākimiyyah is singling Allah out in his right to legislate. Nobody else has the right to legislate. And Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen, in his book, he writes that whoever takes this position to legislate, he has claimed Tawhīd, he has taken away from Allah's Rubūbiyyah or Ulūhiyyah, and he has made himself a legislating lord. So whoever agrees with him on this or obeys him in this becomes a Mushrik because he has made him another lord. And this is in his book ash-Sharh al-Mumti'.

So this does not mean that I'm saying that everyone who has voted before just instantly becomes Mushrikīn, and all their deeds become void. There is something called "Jahl al-Hāl," which is called ignorance of reality. For example, someone takes a Qur'ān and throws it in the garbage - disrespecting the Mus'haf is Kufr. If a person knowingly does this, he becomes a Kafir. But if he takes a book and just throws it in

the garbage, that's not an act of Kufr. Even though that book is the Qur'ān, he did not know it was the Qur'ān. If he knew it was the Qur'ān, he wouldn't have done it.

So similarly, there are people who don't know the reality of the situation. When they are voting for someone, they are taking away the right of Allah to legislate. Are there any other excuses for committing Shirk? There is one excuse for committing Shirk, and Allah mentions it in the Qur'ān:

مَن كَفَرَ بِٱللَّهِ مِنۢ بَعۡدِ إِيمَٰنِهِۦٓ إِلَّا مَنۡ أُكۡرِهَ وَقَلۡبُهُۥ مُطۡمَئِنُّۢ بِٱلۡإِيمَٰنِ

"Whoever disbelieves in [i.e., denies] Allāh after his belief except for one who is forced [to renounce his religion] while his heart is secure in faith."
[16:106]

So Allah is describing a people who commit Kufr after believing in Islam. Then He says, ***"Except for one who is forced [to renounce his religion] while his heart is secure in faith."***

And there is a book called Nāwāqid al-Islām which goes through the nullifiers of Islam. Basically it's a list of ten actions that if you're a Muslim and you commit these actions, it takes you out of the fold of Islam.

For example, one of them is committing black magic. Another one is to say that the Shari'ah of Muhammad ﷺ does not apply to you. For example, some extreme Sufis say that they've reached such a station that they don't have to pray five times a day. All these things are Kufr. At the end of the book, the author says: *"There is no difference in these nullifiers whether the person was serious about it, whether he was joking, or whether he was in fear, except if he was forced."*

So that's the important point that we have to focus on. The Ayah that I mentioned, talking about the excuse for Shirk, was revealed because of the companion 'Ammār ibn Yāsir radiyAllāhu 'anhu. His mother was the first martyr in Islam, Sumayyah radiyAllāhu 'anha. He was in such a position where he was in fear for his life that he uttered a statement of Kufr in order to save himself. He came to the Prophet ﷺ, and the Prophet said that Allah has excused him from that. It's not like he committed a sin and then Allah forgave him for it. He never committed a sin in the first place. Allah has excused him totally. The reason for that is because he was forced. He was in fear for his life. His life was under threat.

And scholars have gone in depth explaining what Ikrāh or coercion is. They also count people threatening, taking away children, and taking away large amounts of wealth. All these fall under Ikrāh. In order to further explain the difference between being in fear versus being forced, we can look at the companions, the early companions. You find companions like Abu Bakr and Zubayr, and you find weaker companions like Bilal and 'Ammār, radiyAllāhu 'anhum. I make this distinction between weaker and stronger companions because the stronger companions had

people they could rely upon - their tribes. They had political backing. They were protected. The weaker companions didn't have anyone protecting them. So when they were being whipped, tortured, and dragged, they were fearing for their lives. But these companions didn't have an actual threat directly upon them, and they didn't have the excuse to commit an action or say a statement of Kufr.

And so when we bring this to the modern day, we could equate American Muslims to the stronger companions. And the weaker companions, to Muslims in places like Gaza or the Uyghur people in China. And the reason for that is because they are in such situations where they genuinely are under threat of their lives. But when we look at our situation, we're living in peace here. We have no threat for our lives. We're not being forced to vote. There's nobody pointing a gun at you saying you have to vote. Nobody's threatening to take away your children if you don't vote. Nobody is going to fine you for not voting. You're completely free not to vote. And even when we look at the broader reality of us as American Muslims, we're free to pray whenever we want. We're free to donate money to whoever we want. We're free to go wherever we want. We can go on Hajj. We can fast as much as we want. We have all these things. And legally, technically, I can talk about جهاد and the rules for جهاد. It's not an issue. The only issue is if I'm actively calling for جهاد. But that's just to show the extent of the freedom that we have here.

And so basically, my point here is: even though we're in the position of Abu Bakr radiyAllāhu 'anhu and we fear that Bilal radiyAllāhu 'anhu is going to be killed, we don't have an excuse to commit actions of Kufr. We can't weaken our position or compromise just so that someone else gets saved.

And lastly, I want to mention the role of a Fatwa. A Fatwa is something that comes from a mufti who you trust, and it is specific to your situation. It can't just be taken by anyone and applied to a different situation. An example of that is if there was a mufti who allowed voting in one country, you can't take that and say, *"Okay, he allows voting,"* and apply it to your situation.

Another example, a person goes to a mufti and says, *"Mufti, I trust you. I've been following you for a long time. I trust your source and what you have to say. My wife is pregnant, there are complications, and the doctor says that there's this chance of survival for the baby and the mother - what should I do?"* And he issues the Fatwa saying, *"It's better for you to get an abortion than risk the mother's life."* You can't look at that Fatwa and say, *"Oh, abortions are Halal,"* and just apply it across the board to everyone.

Similarly, if there is a situation like in India, or Gaza, or with the Uyghurs - and this is not me issuing the Fatwa - I'm saying it's possible that there could be a mufti who issues this Fatwa, saying, *"You can vote in these situations because there is a genuine threat to our lives, or our children's lives, or our wealth."* We can't take that Fatwa and apply it to ourselves.

So, in conclusion, the issue with the widespread acceptance of voting in America as Muslims comes down to two issues.

The first is that we need to understand there's a difference between being in fear and being forced. I could say, *"Oh, what if an American soldier comes in and kills me right now?"* It's not something I fear, because I'm not under threat. There's no reason for me to fear that.

The second reason is understanding the wrongful application of one Fatwa to everyone else. You can't do that. If you take a Fatwa from someone else and apply it across the board elsewhere, you are claiming that you have that Mufti's knowledge and his understanding of the complexities of that situation and that you have an understanding of the complexities of all the situations that you're applying it to.

So please, **don't vote.** That's all I have to say.